

Study on the Role of Educational Drama in Promoting Students' Thinking Quality in Senior High School English Teaching

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Abstract: President Xi recently put forward developing education by insisting on the principle of people in the centre. The proposal of the core competencies of English also means that the idea of people-oriented education has been implemented in practice. For the first time, the thinking quality is clearly listed as the goal of English subjects, which further clarifies the educational value of English courses. As a student-centered teaching method, educational drama appeared in China at the beginning of this century because of its role in promoting the development of students' language ability and thinking quality. Based on the discussion of the definitions of educational drama and thinking quality, this paper attempts to analyze the role of educational drama in promoting the development of students' thinking quality in senior high school English teaching in order to promote the spread of educational drama in China.

Keywords: Educational Drama; Thinking Quality; Senior High School English Teaching.

1. Introduction

President Xi ever said: "We will fully implement the Party's educational policy, carry out the fundamental task of cultivating morality and educating people, and train socialist builders and successors. We will continue to develop education in a people-centered manner." Education in the new era should not only bring together talents from all over the world for national development, but also put the people as the core of education development. In the English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools published by the Ministry of Education (2017 edition), core competencies of subjects is taken as the goal of English curriculum for the first time, and compared with the previous three-dimensional goal, "thinking quality" is proposed as one of the four core competencies. It means that in the course reform, the "people-oriented" educational thought is really implemented in education, thinking about education from the perspective of people, positioning education, facing the all-round development of people, so that students have the ability of lifelong learning. According to Professor Nellie McCaslin (1990), a leading figure in the development of educational drama, educational drama can cultivate people's thinking ability; Li Yingning (1999), "the first person in Mainland educational drama", also mentioned that educational drama plays a role in cultivating the ability of observation, thinking and judgment. It can be seen that educational drama plays a special role in promoting the development of thinking quality in the core competencies of English, implementing the "people-oriented" educational thought and the fundamental task of cultivating morality. In addition, Yanzhen Ma and Yinsheng Liu concluded that there are many problems that need to be solved in the traditional high school English classroom, such as the fractional theory, the emphasis on teaching rather than learning, and the emphasis on memory rather than thinking. Therefore, the application of drama in the context of high school English teaching can not only solve the problem of neglecting the development of thinking in traditional English classes, but also actively respond to the socialist education policy and

effectively implement the new curriculum standards, which is conducive to promoting the development of students' thinking quality, promoting students' all-round development and lifelong learning, and thus implementing the fundamental task of cultivating morality and cultivating people.

2. The Concept of Educational Drama

Drama is inextricably linked with education. Wei Pan (2007) explained in her book that as early as the ancient Greek period, the West transmitted to the public the heroic spirit of bravery and indomitable courage by portraying tragic heroes in dramas. The "music" teaching in the "six arts" education in ancient China also contains drama factors.

Since the publication of the first book on educational drama, *The Dramatic Method of Teaching* (Harriet Finlay-Johnson, 1912) in 1912, educational drama has been around for over a hundred years. In foreign countries, there has been a mature education system, which has produced educational dramatics, and a set of independent subject theory and practice methods (Jun Xu, 2017). At first, educational Drama was a literal translation of the earliest DIE (Drama in Education). Later, with the emergence and spread of TIE (Theatre in Education) and American Creative Drama in China, the concept of educational drama began to generalize and become vague. It is now generally accepted that it includes DIE, TIE and Creative Drama, translated as Educational Drama, and DIE is translated as drama pedagogy (Jun Xu, 2014). According to Professor Zhang Xiaohua (2003) of Taiwan University of the Arts, "Educational drama is a teaching method that uses the skills of drama and theater to engage in school classrooms. It is the natural law of human nature, spontaneous contact with the group and the outside. Under the guidance of the director's plan and structure, it is carried out in the form of creative drama, improvisation, role playing, imitation and games." By definition, educational drama is a people-oriented teaching method used by teachers in the classroom. Education is its ultimate goal, and drama is only a means and tool to achieve the teaching goal. Educational drama was born in the United Kingdom, which

has a strong tradition of drama, popular in various educational institutions in Europe, developed vigorously in the United States, and later spread to Taiwan and Hong Kong. According to Yu Fu (2018), from the very beginning, drama performance was limited to kindergartens, to the inclusion of drama in the national curriculum system of primary and secondary schools in the form of legal provisions. It is because of the attention of teachers around the world that this educational import entered the Chinese mainland, emerging in kindergartens in the early 21st century, and gradually applied to primary and secondary school classrooms with the education reform.

3. Thinking Quality in the New Curriculum Standards

3.1. Thinking Quality as the Core Competency

Language and thinking are closely related. Language learning needs the help of thinking, and the development of thinking also needs to rely on language. Professor Cheng Xiaotang (2011) once discussed the role of English learning in promoting the development of students' thinking: "Language and thinking are closely related, and learning a language other than the mother tongue plays an important role in promoting the development of the brain and mind", and clearly proposed ten kinds of thinking abilities that can be further developed through English learning. In January 2018, Ministry of Education officially released the "English curriculum standards of ordinary High School" (2017 edition), the core competencies of English subjects was officially defined for the first time, and the thinking quality was included in it. The core competencies of the English subject focuses on both the instrumental (language value) and humanistic (educational value) of the course, including the key abilities and essential qualities of the subject, namely language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality and learning ability (Xiaotang Cheng, 2015). Among them, the thinking quality refers to the ability and level of logic, criticality, innovation and other aspects. The specific curriculum objectives are expressed as "being able to distinguish the specific phenomena of language and culture, sort out and summarize information, construct new concepts, analyze and infer the logical relations of information, correctly evaluate various ideas and opinions, and creatively express their own opinions, have the awareness of multiple thinking and the ability to think creatively." Careful analysis shows that its goal corresponds to logical, critical and creative thinking. Therefore, in actual English teaching, the design and implementation of English learning activities should start from these three aspects, and enhance the quality of thinking by enhancing the ability of logical thinking, critical thinking and creative thinking.

3.2. Three Elements of Thinking Quality Under the Vision of the New Curriculum Standards

3.2.1. Logical Thinking

Logical thinking ability refers to the ability of people to think correctly and reasonably, that is, the ability to compare and classify things, analyze and synthesize, abstract and summarize, induction and deduction. According to Geming WU (2002), training students' logical thinking helps them to view things correctly, objectively and comprehensively, develop intelligence, improve learning ability and innovation ability. When used in English learning, it is possible to

analyze and judge the logical relationship behind the language, because the collocation between words, the arrangement of the components in the sentence and the order of the paragraphs are not arbitrary, and there are certain reasons and grounds. Therefore, learning collocation between words, composition arrangement rules in sentences, and logical order between paragraphs is the process of observation, analysis, synthesis, and judgment, which is the process of logical thinking.

3.2.2. Critical Thinking

According to the description of the goal of thinking quality in the new curriculum standard, critical thinking is to "correctly evaluate various ideas", to make a fair and prudent judgment on others or things, rather than accepting various ideas without questioning, including positive thinking, deep understanding, analysis and judgment, distinguishing right from wrong, reasoning and demonstration. Rude Liu (2000) ever put forward that the cultivation of critical thinking ability helps students to correctly judge the authenticity, reliability and value of information in the era of information explosion, and make correct decisions on this basis. In the construction of high school English classroom, students can be guided to analyze and distinguish the viewpoints, attitudes and emotions in language materials to judge their authenticity and reliability, and critical thinking can be trained in this process. Because the objective world described in language, especially in the second language, is different from the real objective world, the views and feelings expressed in language are not exactly the same as the real views and feelings, because the process of conveying information and expressing views and feelings in language will automatically add its own subjectivity. Therefore, language materials can not only reflect objective information, but also imply the views, attitudes and emotions of the speakers. Guiding students to analyze the hidden meanings behind language materials is conducive to the development of critical thinking.

3.2.3. Creative Thinking

According to the revision of Bloom's classification of educational goals by Anderson et al. (2001), the cognitive process is divided from low level to high level: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and innovating. Among them, innovation belongs to the highest stage of cognitive process, so creative thinking also belongs to a higher level of thinking ability. creative thinking refers to using original and novel ways to solve problems, breaking through traditional thinking boundaries, and putting forward distinctive problem-solving solutions, thus producing novel and valuable thinking results. Zuozhong Zhang (2002) insisted that the cultivation of creative thinking ability can improve students' creative ability and help students creatively solve problems. Students can express new concepts and ideas by changing word collocation, sentence expression structure, language use situation, etc., so as to develop creative thinking. This kind of teaching activity is not rare in English classroom, such as reading pictures and making up stories, acting, drama performance, and writing after reading are all activities that can promote the development of creative thinking.

4. The Effect of Educational Drama on the Development of Thinking Quality in Senior High School English Teaching

Senior high school stage is an important stage of students' mental development, grasping this critical period can achieve twice the effect on the development of students' thinking. According to Jean Piaget's (1982) theory of stages of cognitive development, high school students are in the "stage of formal operation", when teenagers no longer use concrete things to perform logical operations, and their individual thinking ability has developed and matured, capable of solving problems according to logical reasoning, induction or deduction. Educational drama can promote students' imagination, creativity, observation, thinking and judgment, etc. Therefore, the application of educational drama in high school English classes is helpful to grasp the critical period of students' thinking development and promote the development of students' thinking quality. Lowell Swartzell (1990) believes that educational drama includes all school drama and is mostly related to non-performance, among which role-playing, situational dialogue and textbook play rehearsal are its basic forms. Among them, role-playing can arouse students' logical thinking through students' thinking of the characters' psychology and the subsequent interpretation of the front of the plot. Situational dialogue is the specific application of situational teaching method, the flexible carrier of multi-modal teaching, and the most important thing in language teaching. Students explore the "meaning between the words" in the process of chewing and presenting language materials, so as to exercise their critical thinking. Textbook play rehearsal is students' re-creation of the play, and the process of students' processing of the play, in essence, is a creative process.

To sum up, the author will take three basic application forms of educational drama, such as role playing, situational dialogue and textbook drama rehearsal, as examples to discuss the promotion of educational drama to the logic, criticality and creativity of thinking in high school English teaching.

4.1. The Role of Educational Drama in Promoting Logical Thinking

Role-playing was originally introduced into the school classroom as a psychological education method by educational theorists in the United States in the 1960s, which was called "role-playing teaching". Role-playing means that in the classroom, the teacher sets up a real problem situation, and the students play the role of the characters in the situation, analyze the problems and contradictions in the situation, and try to solve the problems with different methods. In role-playing, students must stand in the perspective of role-playing, analyze the mental logic of role-playing characters, synthesize the situation they are in, and solve problems through the logical sequence of "experience-think-action". Therefore, role-playing can promote students to consider problems more systematically and comprehensively, and promote students' ability to think about problems in an immersive way, make comprehensive comparisons and make judgments, thus promoting the development of students' logical thinking. Taking John Snow Defeats "King Cholera" as an example, this paper discusses the effect of role playing on the development of students' logical thinking. This text

describes the entire process of medical scientist John Snow from identifying problems in the cause of cholera, proposing hypotheses, selecting methods of investigation, mobilising and analyzing data, searching for supporting evidence, until finally reaching a conclusion and proposing a solution. The script contains eight roles, of which John Snow is the main role and the other seven students are the auxiliary roles. In the process of role-playing, students should first assign the roles and build the performance framework; The second is to interpret the thinking process of John Snow and analyze the psychological activities of the character; Finally, plan the performance content and complete the presentation of the script. The students' psychological reasoning process on how Dr. John Snow solves the mystery and finds the root cause of cholera is the focus of the role play. Especially when John Snow is faced with various choices, students should make a choice that conforms to his psychological logic according to his personality characteristics of selfless dedication, meticulous and rigorous attitude. After the performance, the teacher led the students to discuss the story. Each student has a different growth background, holds different values, and has different behavior orientation and opinion orientation. It is these differences that allow the discussion to be carried out. Through the collision of viewpoints, students' thinking can also be developed. Especially in the process of role playing, students need to reasonably analyze, compare, judge and choose according to the character and the situation. Therefore, the students' logical thinking ability can be improved through role-playing, a basic form of educational drama application.

4.2. The Role of Educational Drama in Promoting Critical Thinking

Situational dialogue is a form of activity belonging to situational teaching method, that is, make use of familiar situations to practice enough dialogue to improve students' language ability. In the process of situational dialogue, the teacher needs to teach the students various languages needed in the situation before the activity, then build a familiar situation for the students, give the students the tasks to complete in the situation, and finally give the students the space to perform. In the process of situational dialogue, students not only need to judge the partner's true attitude and emotion according to his or her speech content, but also need to judge his or her tone, expression and body language, and then give corresponding responses to complete the task together. In this process, middle school students judge the authenticity of the other party's language through active thinking and deep understanding, and judge the true attitude and emotion hidden by the other party by observing the scene, intonation, expression and body language, which can promote the development of critical thinking of students. Here, the author uses "Teenage Life", a compulsory high school English course, to explain the role of situational dialogue in drama class in promoting the development of critical thinking. As the first unit of high school English, it mainly introduces the wonderful and beautiful life of high school to freshmen, and helps new students adapt to high school life faster by introducing campus clubs and challenges of high school life.

The teacher invites a student to be the founder of the club, and the student needs to select two more students as partners to discuss the establishment of the club, and then invite five more students to be members of the club. In the process of negotiation and invitation, students need to judge the real intention of the invited object by means of facial expressions

and body movements, and use negotiation skills to persuade peers and members. After the activity, students not only improved their language ability, but also exercised their critical thinking by analyzing and discriminating each other's attitudes and emotions to judge the authenticity and reliability of their language. Therefore, situational dialogue, a basic form of educational drama, can promote the development of students' critical thinking ability.

4.3. The Role of Educational Drama in Promoting Creative Thinking

In professor Huang's book (2009), in the middle of 1980s, textbook play was popular in Chinese mainland, regarded as a teaching method combining plays with textbooks. In September 2015, The State Council issued Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools, proposing that various artistic means such as drama, film and television should be added to school education and teaching. It can be seen from this that textbook plays are the product of educational reform and drama development, and play a role in promoting students' education in all aspects. In China, textbook drama rehearsal is mainly based on texts with dramatic plots and strong conflicts in Chinese or English, and teachers lead students in the creation, arrangement and performance of drama scripts. Compared with the traditional teacher-oriented classroom teaching, textbook play rehearsal is student-oriented, and the whole process relies on students' enthusiasm, initiative, executive power, creativity and imagination, and teachers are in the auxiliary position, so textbook play is widely welcomed by students and teachers. The process of rehearsing textbook plays is not only a process for students to learn and apply language knowledge and skills, but also a process of collaborative creation. Therefore, after students finish the textbook play rehearsal, their creativity of thinking will be naturally enhanced.

Taking Natural Disasters as an example, this paper explores the role of educational drama in promoting the development of students' creative thinking. The story tells of a tsunami in Asia that caused more than six thousand deaths and heavy property damage. The teacher led the students to understand the theme of the whole text and the helplessness of human beings in the face of natural disasters, and then let the students freely use their imagination to construct the story plot and character, express the theme of the article, and the dialogue, actions and props of the characters in each plot. In the end, students were asked to show their achievements in front of the whole class and to discuss the plot of the story. In the collision of ideas, they could broaden their thinking, stimulate their imagination and break through the thinking pattern. Therefore, students' creative thinking ability can be continuously improved through textbook play rehearsal.

5. Conclusion

Educational Drama has owned a history for over one hundred years abroad, and has been constructed with mature theoretical system and practical methods. Although it was introduced into China about twenty years ago, its localization still has a long way to go. However, we can see that because of the unique role of drama in English classroom, drama has gradually attracted the attention of Chinese education

scholars. With the continuous reform of curriculum and the continuous update of teaching concepts, drama teaching has become an important means to promote the development of students' thinking quality, an important way to build high-quality courses, and an important carrier to implement the national policy of moral education and human education. Students' logical, critical and creative thinking can be improved through the basic activities of drama education, such as role play, situational dialogue, textbook drama rehearsal, etc. Therefore, in the future English class, teachers can try to apply educational drama to teaching activities in order to promote the development of students' thinking.

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